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NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE BOARD

A FEDERATION

OF

AMERICAN INDUSTRIES

FOR

STUDY OF INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS

IMPROVEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

PROMOTION OF INDUSTRIAL PROSPERITY

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NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE BOARD

No. 15 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

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1919

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NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE BOARD

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THE United States has grown within less than a century from a primarily agricultural community into the first manufacturing nation of the world. In 1850 the value of its manufactured products was approximately $1,000,000,000; in 1914 it exceeded $24,000,000,000, and for 1918 the total may safely be estimated at more than $30,000,000,000.

This marvelous transformation has been accompanied by vast changes in the social, economic, and political life of the nation. These changes have in turn created great industrial problems which have often been met by temporary adjustment rather than by permanent solution.

The industrial situation created by war-time necessities added to the complications already existing. Today, the intricate problems of the pending industrial readjustment press for solution and accentuate the imperative need for clear thinking and sound business and governmental policies.

The Need for Organization

If American industry is to have its proper share in the solution of these problems it must be organized for the task. It must have a collective opinion and an appropriate channel through which to give authoritative expression to its collective judgment on questions vitally affecting the welfare of industry and of the nation. While many industrial associations had been, and are now, performing indispensable service to their members in the study of industrial problems, they had no effective machinery to co-ordinate their efforts in dealing with many problems common to all.

Organization of the Conference Board

The National Industrial Conference Board is the response to the demand for co-operation among manufacturers. It was organized to unify and centralize the efforts of industrial associations in studying and solving the economic problems of industry and to take constructive action in respect to issues vital to the welfare of all.

Founded in May, 1916, the National Industrial Conference Board is a federation of national associations of manufacturers in the principal branches of American industry, and of closely allied engineering organizations of a national character; recently state associa-

tions of manufacturers have become associate members of the Board. As now constituted the Conference Board comprises twenty-three of these organizations, through which it may speak and act for many thousands of representative manufacturers employing over seven million workers. The delegates appointed by the member associations constitute the governing body for deliberation and executive action; in addition, the Conference Board avails itself of the knowledge, experience, and judgment of many other industrial leaders as councilors and committee members.

The organization of the Conference Board on the basis of association rather than individual membership tends to increase the strength and prestige of the member associations and to broaden interest in their activities.

These associations retain full independence of action except in so far as their delegates to the Board may commit them to any particular policy in a specific case, or except in so far as they may voluntarily elect to follow the suggestions of the Board. The Board is, therefore, a true federation.

The membership of the Board is steadily being extended to other national and state associations of like character. It is expected that in due time all important associations of this kind will be included, thus making the Board still more the spokesman of American Industry.

Purposes of the Conference Board

The National Industrial Conference Board is an organization in which American industries are associated for the common purpose of promoting the stability and prosperity of Industrial America. The objects of the Board are:

First: To ascertain pertinent economic facts underlying and affecting industrial conditions, and to draw from them justified conclusions;

Second: To secure on this basis joint deliberation and joint action by the manufacturers of the country through their chosen delegates, for the sound development of American Industry;

Third: To promote understanding and satisfactory relations between employers and employees as an essential basis for the conduct of industry and the welfare of the nation;

Fourth: To give the public an accurate conception of the character, scope, and importance of industry, its needs and its intimate relation to individual and national well-being, to the end that this knowledge may be reflected in an intelligent public opinion and in wise legislation;

Fifth: To command, by the justice of its contentions, the force of its collective experience, and the strength of its representative

character, the attention of the Government when formulating industrial legislation and policies.

In pursuance of this program the National Industrial Conference Board has so organized its activities that it is virtually an agency for the collection and dissemination of pertinent facts and opinions, a forum for constructive discussion, and an instrument for co-operative action on matters vitally affecting the industrial development of the nation.

Industrial Research

Under the Board's direction a staff of experts is making searching inquiry into fundamental industrial and economic truths. The Board enters on such research with fixed principles but without preconceived opinions except that it believes in a high conception of equitable human relationships and in the preservation of individual opportunity and freedom of action as great as compatible with the public welfare.

The Board's research activities cover a wide field of study, embracing various subjects. To date the following research reports have been issued:

Research Report No. 1—Workmen's Compensation Acts in the United States—The Legal Phase. (Apr., 1917. Reissued Apr., 1919.)

A concise outline of the principal provisions of Workmen's Compensation laws, their character and intent, and marked differences in administrative and judicial interpretation.

Research Report No. 2—Analysis of British Wartime Reports on Hours of Work as Related to Output and Fatigue. (November, 1917.) A summary of voluminous and important reports of the British Health of Munition Workers Committee, and of other British agencies, to show the effect of various schedules of hours of labor on efficiency and health of workers under wartime conditions.

Research Report No. 3—Strikes in American Industry in Wartime, April 6 to October 6, 1917. (March, 1918.) A first-hand investigation of strikes in American industry during the first six months of our participation in the war; their character and extent, the consequent loss of production, and the causes and demands, as well as means and terms of settlement.

Research Report No. 4 — Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers — Cotton Manufacturing. (March, 1918.) An original study of prevailing hours of work in northern and southern cotton mills and of the relationship between different hours of work schedules, efficiency of production, and health of workers.

Research Report No. 5 — The Canadian Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. (April, 1918.) An historical and analytical review of the Canadian Act and of its effect upon the avoidance of labor disturbances during the ten years of its operation.

Research Report No. 6 — Sickness Insurance or Sickness Prevention? (May, 1918.) A concise and constructive presentation of the problem of sickness in the United States, emphasizing the need for thorough knowledge of the extent and character of sickness and its prevention before committing the nation to any policy of insurance.

Research Report No. 7 — Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers — Boot and Shoe Industry. (June, 1918.) A study similar to that covered by Research Report No. 4 in respect to the cotton manufacturing industry.

Research Report No. 8 — Wartime Employment of Women in the Metal Trades. (July, 1918.) A review of the results of employment of women in new occupations in American metal-working establishments during the war, presenting American experience in respect to quantitative and qualitative work of women.

Research Report No. 9 — Wartime Changes in the Cost of Living — July, 1914, to June, 1918. (August, 1918.) A report of an investi-

gation of changes in the cost of living for a period of four years, with a brief discussion of the main factors and their proportionate importance in the family budget of the wage-earner.

Research Report No. 10 — Arbitration and Wage-Fixing in Australia. (October, 1918.) A study of experience with Australian labor legislation designed to prevent or reduce industrial friction.

Research Report No. 11 — The Eight-Hour Day Defined. (December, 1918.) A monograph outlining the various meanings of the term for the purpose of clarifying discussion of this controversial issue.

Research Report No. 12 — Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers — Wool Manufacturing. (December, 1918.) A study similar to that covered by Research Report No. 4.

Research Report No. 13 — Rest Periods for Industrial Workers. (January, 1919.) An investigation of experience in American industry with systematized rest pauses during work periods and their effect upon health and industrial efficiency, especially among women and minors.

Research Report No. 14 — Wartime Changes in the Cost of Living — July, 1914, to November, 1918. (February, 1919.) A supplemental

report to Research Report No. 9, bringing forward to the signing of the armistice the changes in the cost of living of wage-earners.

Research Report No. 15 — Problems of Industrial Readjustment in the United States. (February, 1919.) A critical analysis of the issues involved, defining the problem without attempting to solve it, but furnishing a concrete basis for discussion and solution.

Research Report No. 16 — Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers — Silk Manufacturing. (March, 1919.) A study similar to that covered by Research Report No. 4.

The Conference Board has, in addition, extensive studies under way in respect to:

Hours of work as related to output and health of workers in the metal trades, foundries, and other major branches of industrial activity.

Measures of conciliation and arbitration in European countries and the United States.

Wartime changes in wage rates and earnings in major American industries.

Continued study of periodical changes in the cost of living for wage-earners.

Absenteeism in industrial employment.

Systems of shop committees and other forms of representation of workers, and their results.

The relative merits of different systems of wage payments.

An historical and critical review of the work of the National War Labor Board.

Other investigations will be undertaken as prevailing conditions may suggest their consideration.

The reports herein described, while involving a vast amount of investigation, are issued in concise form. They present for ready reference the essential facts developed by research and are given wide distribution among manufacturers, economists, colleges, libraries and other institutions and individuals interested in industrial problems. They are also quoted from and commented upon in the daily press and in technical journals and other periodicals.

Taxation and Other Studies

The National Industrial Conference Board has devoted much time to the consideration of federal revenue legislation. It has, on the one hand, frequently informed its membership in respect to taxation principles and provisions and, on the other hand, has petitioned Congress for changes in contemplated legislation, and has asked the United States Collector of Internal Revenue for equitable

interpretation of provisions of tax laws and for adequate administrative rulings.

The Conference Board is also issuing from time to time concise monographs analyzing labor conditions at home and abroad and their relation to economic and political influences.

In its critical review, entitled "*A Case of Federal Propaganda in Our Public Schools*" (February, 1919), which deals with three volumes — "Lessons in Community and National Life" — issued by the United States Department of Education for use in public schools, the Board exposed federal propaganda of a partisan and misleading character.

Industrial News Survey

Through the weekly publication of the *Industrial News Survey*, a digest of industrial news as reported in reliable newspapers, magazines, reviews, and government documents, the business man is given important and valuable information on industrial matters which he can assimilate at a glance.

The information is grouped under the following headings: Governmental, Legislative, National War Labor Board, Workmen's Insurance, Labor Disputes, Labor Supply, Wages and Hours of Labor, Industrial Preparedness, Trade and Commerce, Transportation. Often summaries of research reports

of the Board, new federal revenue legislation, and important books on industrial economic subjects, are issued as supplements to the *Industrial News Survey*.

This digest has proved of much value to business executives. In many cases, employers have subscribed for extra copies for their superintendents and foremen in order that the latter may develop a keener interest in and a broader understanding of industrial conditions.

Industrial Information

In addition, the Conference Board aims to keep manufacturers informed in respect to specific problems of the employment relation and in regard to important pending legislation coming peculiarly within the scope of the Board's work.

This service is being gradually extended as information based on the experience of manufacturers with various methods for improving the employment relation and increasing working efficiency is assembled and studied.

Board Meetings

The information assembled and the reports prepared by the Board's research staff are placed before the Board members at their

monthly meetings for discussion and for expression of collective judgment. Frequently, prominent industrialists not members of the Board, and other well-known business leaders and economists, are brought into the discussions. The reports issued by the Board therefore reflect the joint conclusions of competent business men and research students, thus insuring to them serious consideration.

At the monthly Board meetings new lines of investigation and policies of action are decided upon. The Board members also review and analyze the national and international currents of social, economic, and political character in their effect upon industrial development. Partisan political, sectional, and sectarian views are not permitted to enter into the deliberations of the Board.

From time to time the regular Board meetings are enlarged into joint sessions with financial subscribers to the Board and selected business leaders in order to secure the benefit of their advice on national questions of vital importance to industry. The various meetings thus afford an opportunity to obtain first-hand information on important industrial issues and, by comparing the experience and judgment of those present, assist the Board in guiding the thought and action of the member associations on matters common to all.

Co-operation with Government

Through the unusual circumstances of the nation's crisis during the war and of the pending tasks of readjustment the Board has been called upon to perform important service not originally contemplated. It has responded to the call and acted as the representative of American industry in co-operation with the Government in an endeavor to find solutions of certain industrial and economic problems precipitated by the war.

The Government first invited the National Industrial Conference Board to appoint an advisory committee to the Council of National Defense to assist in the consideration of economic questions growing out of the Government's war program. The Board was later asked by the Council to submit, and did submit on September 6, 1917, recommendations touching on the employment relation during the war.

Growing out of this action and subsequent meetings, the Government on January 28, 1918, requested the National Industrial Conference Board to appoint five manufacturers to meet with five representatives of organized labor and with two representatives of the public for the working out of a national labor program during the war. This conference committee prepared a set of principles and policies and suggested the necessary

machinery for their observance, to the end that by mediation and, in certain cases, by arbitration, industrial disputes might be adjudicated and strikes and lockouts be avoided in industries vital to the successful prosecution of the war.

On April 8, 1918, the President of the United States by proclamation approved the agreement and appointed the members of the conference committee as the National War Labor Board to carry into effect the injunction that "there should be no strikes or lockouts during the war." Thus the National Industrial Conference Board was called upon to represent American industry in the most vital relationship that the incidence of war has produced.

Soon after the War Labor Policies Board was created by the Government the National Industrial Conference Board was invited to appoint a committee for co-operation with this new Governmental agency for standardization of wages and work conditions and stabilization of the labor market. The signing of the armistice on November 11, 1918, brought this wartime activity to an end.

More recently the Secretary of the United States Department of Commerce recognized the representative character of the National Industrial Conference Board when he in-

vited the Board to appoint a committee for co-operation with that Department.

The Board thus hopes to place at the service of the Government the combined knowledge and judgment of the leaders in various branches of industry and to promote proper and helpful relations between American industry and the Government.

Industrial Prize Essays

In an endeavor to stimulate thought on industrial subjects and to further the solution of labor problems, the National Industrial Conference Board has announced a "*Prize Essay Contest in Industrial Economics*," open to all persons except members and staff members of the Board. A prize of one thousand dollars is offered for the best monograph on any one of eight selected subjects. Eminent men have been secured as judges to make the award. It is the intention to make such prize essay contests an annual or semi-annual feature of the Board's activities.

European Commission

Recognizing the importance of the tremendous changes in the social and economic life now developing in European countries and of their effect upon conditions at home, the Conference Board appointed a commission of manufacturers, assisted by trained in-

vestigators, to study and report on current industrial conditions in England, France, Belgium, and Italy. The sending of this commission was prompted by the belief that a study of conditions in flux and of the prevailing industrial and social unrest in these European countries will develop many valuable suggestions for the adjustment of American industrial conditions.

Financial Support

Voluntary subscriptions by co-operating associations and public-spirited individuals are the resources on which the Board now depends for carrying on its work. The contemplated enlargement of the Board's activities and opportunity for rendering more comprehensive service to American industry and to the nation at large will be made possible as industrial leaders increasingly give the Conference Board moral and financial support.

Although individual employers participate in the activities of the Conference Board through membership in affiliated associations, they may by becoming financial subscribers enter into more intimate relationship with the Board. Aside from attendance at the enlarged Board meetings already referred to, subscribers receive directly all research reports and monographs of the Board as well

as special memoranda on a large variety of timely industrial questions. They are also entitled to specific advice from the Information Service of the Board on questions of industrial interest on which definite conclusions are steadily being suggested as a result of the Board's research work.

In addition to thus securing for themselves a valuable source of information on industrial problems, financial subscribers also have the satisfaction of sharing in the constructive work of the Board for the upbuilding of American industry.

Epitome

A sound solution of the problems constantly confronting American industry is essential to the development of enterprise, the well-being of workers, and the progress of the nation. It calls for thorough study, broad consideration, and intelligent action. The National Industrial Conference Board, with its facilities for research and analysis, for assembling the ideas and experience of representative industrial leaders, and for giving authoritative expression to sound policies, offers a service of distinct value to the individual manufacturer, to industry as a whole, and to the nation.

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE BOARD

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Treasurer Hood Rubber Co., Watertown, Mass.

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